1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

other castes, especially the Brahmins, the Komtis, the toddy-tappers and the shepherds, as well as the Muslims. This category also includes two Malas and a Madiga—all three belonging to untouchable castes. The land in the fourth group belongs to several different castes. However, many of these families possess only small fragments of dry land which are quite inadequate for their needs and can in no sense be described as 'economic holdings'.

The above figures have been taken from government records. While the possession of land sold to persons outside the kin-group is given after the completion of the necessary legal formalities, the division of shares from the family land does not necessitate this and in consequence we find that the land shown in the name of one person in the official records may actually be in the possession of several families. This may be illustrated by two examples. E. D. R. has four acres of dry land and six acres of wet land recorded in his name in government registers. The dry land and three acres of wet land are under his exclusive possession. This land is cultivated by him; and the entire harvest belongs to him. But the other three acres of wet land are divided into four pieces. One of these fragments is cultivated by E. D. R. himself, one by his cousin S. R. who is E. D. R.'s father's elder brother's son. The other two fragments are cultivated by E. R. and N. R. whose position is a little unusual. In the life-time of E. D. R.'s grandfather they 'came to his house' for suitor service. After serving the family for a stipulated number of years they were married to the daughters of the family, but continued to live there to assist the old man in his cultivation. After the death of E. D. R.'s grandfather they established separate houses of their own, and are now in exclusive possession of these fragments of land which belonged to E. D. R.'s family. From the above it is clear that although the land records show the land as being in the possession of E. D. R. alone, it is in fact possessed by four different families. The Madiga untouchables were given two acres of land as a reward for the services which they render to residents of the village and touring government officials. Official records show this land as being in the possession of one family: in point of fact, it is shared by as many as seven families.

Seceding members of a family get a share of the family's ancestral land. Fragmentation follows this division of ancestral

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

428 property. For many years, however, the land continues to be in
423 the name of only one member of the extended family in the government records. The division of land, cattle and effects takes place under the supervision (and with the advice) of some of the village elders, and the terms and conditions agreed upon at this time are generally respected by the seceding units of the family. In the course of our investigations only three cases came to our notice in which inconvenience was experienced in the working of arrangements thus made. This necessitated the entry of the divi-
423 sion into legally valid documents and government records. Thus, it is clear that while government records show only 189 families as owning land, actually the number of those who possess their own fields is larger. If we do not take into account the houses in the two neighbouring hamlets, Shamirpet proper has 380 houses. Each house represents a family, elementary or joint. Out of these, 240 families have some land of their own, although from among them 60 families possess only tiny fragments. Among the other families some have only dry land, some have very little wet land, while some have highly fragmented land which often lies in many different corners of the village. This still leaves nearly 140 landless families. From these we can eliminate about 20 government officials who are not a part of the permanent population of the village; and about 10 others who have an occupation or calling which gives them a sufficient income to maintain a reasonably comfortable life according to prevailing rural standards. Eliminating these, we have some 110 families that are landless. These are in addition to an equal number of families who have insufficient or uneconomic holdings.

427 Those who have no land, as well as those who have very little land, are left with the alternatives of either working as whole-time agricultural labourers or of cultivating land taken on lease (*kaul*). Persons choosing the second alternative, either pay the owner of the land a fixed sum of money every year, or they give him a quarter or one-third of the produce. Absentee landlordism is almost negligible in Shamirpet, and those who own the greater part of the village land themselves want to cultivate their best fields. Thus only inferior quality land can generally be had on
● 425 lease. With hard work and financial investment this land can be
427 improved, but unfortunately this is impeded by several factors. If the same person continues to hold the lease for certain fields for

1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17

a number of years, according to law he acquires semi-proprietary rights over them. The landlord does not want this to happen, and so with a view to safeguarding his own interests he leases out his land to different persons in different years. A short-term lease is naturally not conducive to land improvement, for the person cultivating the land does not risk any investment in it. If he does improve it, in one of the following years the landlord may lease it out to someone else who offers to pay more than the person who improved the land. Secondly, those who hold most of the agricultural land in the village are interested in maintaining a supply of cheap agricultural labour, without which it would be impossible for them to cultivate their extensive fields. They benefit more by cultivating their land with the help of this labour, than by leasing out their land. If they leased out all their surplus land the cheap labour supply would appreciably diminish, and for want of competition wages of those who were still available would rise. To avoid this they choose to leave some of their land uncultivated, and thus we have the paradox of having in the same village many land-hungry families and several hundred acres of uncultivated land.

The land belongs to the family, and normally the head of the family exercises control over it. On the death of the father, the land and other agricultural property—such as tools, implements and livestock—are distributed equally among the brothers. Provision is made for the marriage of unmarried daughters as well as for the maintenance of the minor sons of the deceased. In very special cases, with the consent of all the brothers, a widowed sister is also given a small share. But this is a gratuity rather than a rightful share.

The agriculturists have considerable sentiment for their land and cattle. If adversity compels them to sell some of their fields or cattle, the day when this is done becomes a day of semi-mourning for the household. The hour of transfer is indeed a sad one, and the farmer will complete the necessary formalities with a heavy heart. For several days the family atmosphere remains overcast with gloom. The womenfolk may even wail and shed tears of real grief. In the sentiments of an Indian peasant, the Earth occupies a mother's position and parting with a fragment of it is nearly tantamount to separation from the mother. It is surprising how cattle become almost members of the agriculturist's family, and how

ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

425 their separation by death or selling causes so much sorrow among the peasants.

423 435 Land is indeed the most precious and coveted possession of the village people. With the exception of women's ornaments, land and cattle are almost the only property they have. With the overall increase in general price levels in recent years, the price of land has also risen. The following table will give an idea of the average prices of different grades of land in 1939 and in 1950.

TABLE III

Prices of Land in 1939 and 1950

Type of land	*Price per acre in rupees*					
	1939 *Grades of land*			1950 *Grades of land*		
	A	B	C	A	B	C
1. Dry land	60	40	18	220	170	75
2. Wet land	250	150	90	1,200	800	480
3. Garden land	300	240	110	1,500	1,200	550

243 434 I propose to examine the standards of living, and relative earnings and expenditure of the different levels of the population in a subsequent chapter. But a consideration of the economics of agriculture will not be out of place here.

The two major crops grown by the people of Shamirpet are rice and millet. Table IV gives the averages per acre of gross income, total cost and net income, in the cultivation of millet, particularly *jawar*. Tables V and VI give similar figures for paddy, for single crop and double crop lands respectively. The figures have been worked out from a survey of a 50% sample of village families cultivating the three different categories of land. Figures are given to the nearest whole number.

TABLE IV

Average Cost and Yield per Acre in the Cultivation of Millet

Grade of land	*Gross income*	*Total expenditure*	*Net income*
A	Rs. 140	Rs. 64	Rs. 76
B	„ 82	„ 40	„ 42
C	„ 62	„ 30	„ 32